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UNCLAS ABU DHABI 000715

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR NEA/ARPI TREUTER, STHORNE, EB/ESC/TFS FOR JSALOOM
TREASURY FOR US SLEVEY, BHAMMERLE, MEPSTEIN
COMMERCE FOR MO'BRIEN
MANAMA FOR JBEAL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KCRM](#) [SOCI](#) [ETRD](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [LI](#) [AE](#)

SUBJECT: UAE SUSPENDS OPERATIONS OF BOUT FRONT COMPANY

REF: ABU DHABI 587

[1](#)1. (U) Summary. The Embassy notified the UAEG on 14 February that Irbis Air, a small air service operating out of Sharjah International Airport, was a UN designated front company for international arms trafficker Viktor Bout. One week later, on February 21, the UAE closed the Irbis office and suspended its flights out of the UAE. End summary.

[1](#)2. (U) Embassy Abu Dhabi and ConGen Dubai learned on February 12 that Irbis Air Company, a front company for international arms trafficker Viktor Bout, was operating flights out of Sharjah International Airport. Irbis is designated under United Nations Security Council Resolutions 15342 and 1521. These resolutions obligate member states to take immediate action against the listed individuals and organizations. ConGen Dubai contacted the Director General of the Sharjah Airport, who confirmed that the flights were occurring. The DG also informed ConGen that Irbis had an office in the Sharjah free zone. ConGen informed him that this activity was a violation of UN sanctions. The DG said he would contact UAE Civil Aviation official responsible for Sharjah airport to discuss how to handle the matter.

[1](#)3. (U) On February 14, DHS/ICE attache provided copies of the UNSCRs and the 1 December 2005 United Nations press release that specifically listed Irbis as a Specially Designated National to the Undersecretary at the Ministry of Interior. On February 15, Ambassador handed Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed (AbZ) the same documents and a letter informing him of the UAE's obligation to shut Irbis down (ref A).

[1](#)4. (U) Sheikh Abdullah contacted Ambassador on February 26 to inform her that the UAE had suspended the operations of Irbis Air on February 21.

[1](#)5. (SBU) Comment. The UAEG is very focused on the negative U.S. press surrounding the Dubai Ports World pending acquisition of six U.S. ports. As evidence of this, AbZ called Ambassador to tell her Irbis had been shut down while he was attending a dinner with President Khalifa and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. End comment.

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